

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5744

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 6237

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, LA

SUBJECT: LAO NEGOTIATIONS: SOUVANNA CLAIMS PROTOCOL
WILL BE SIGNED SEPTEMBER 14

1. I CALLED ON SOUVANNA AFTERNOON SEPTEMBER 10 TO FIND OUT DATE HE HAD IN MIND FOR SIGNING OF PROTOCOL. SOUVANNA SAID THAT HE HAD MET WITH PHOUMI AGAIN THIS MORNING WHO EXPRESSED DESIRE TO LEAVE VIENTIANE THIS WEEK UNLESS PROTOCOL SIGNED SHORTLY. SOUVANNA TOLD ME THAT HE IS SUPERSTITIOUS AND THEREFORE DOES NOT WANT PROTOCOL TO BE SIGNED ON A 13TH. (SEPTEMBER 12TH IS HOLIDAY HERE AND LAO WOULD NOT TRANSACT BUSINESS ON A HOLIDAY.) HENCE HE PLANS PROTOCOL TO BE ONLY INITIALLED ON SEPTEMBER 13 BUT FORMAL SIGNATURE WILL BE DELAYED UNTIL FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 14.

2. SOUVANNA SAID HE HAS SUMMONED NGON SANANIKONE FOR LATER THIS EVENING IN LAST MINUTE EFFORT TO CONVINCE HIM TO ACQUIESCE IN THE PROTOCOL. SOUVANNA SAID THAT TO THE BEST OF HIS KNOWLEDGE NGON IS THE ONLY HOLDOUT. IN ANY CASE, SOUVANNA SAID HE WILL HAVE PROTOCOL SIGNED THIS WEEK BECAUSE HE IS CONCERNED BY THE STRIDENT TONE OF DRV FOREIGN MINISTRY'S STATEMENT ON LAO NEGOTIATIONS ISSUED IN HANOI ON SEPTEMBER 8 WHICH CLEARLY INDICATES DRV IS GETTING IMPATIENT OVER DELAY IN SIGNING OF PROTOCOL.

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3. AS FOR THE KING'S ATTITUDE, SOUVANNA SAID THAT KING TOLD HIM "TO DO WHATEVER HE LIKES TO BRING PEACE BACK TO LAOS BUT THAT IT MUST BE DONE WITHIN CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK." SOUVANNA THOUGHT HE WOULD FIRST HAVE PROTOCOL

SIGNED AND THEN FIND A WAY TO PRESENT IT AND FEBRUARY 21
VIENTIANE AGREEMENT TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. WHILE HE
HAS RESERVATIONS ABOUT ATTITUDE OF THE DEPUTIES, HE
THOUGHT THAT FAR SUPPORT FOR PROTOCOL SHOULD MAKE IT
LESS DIFFICULT TO GET ASSEMBLY APPROVAL IF THAT IS WHAT
IS REQUIRED.

4. SO HERE WE ARE AGAIN, ANOTHER DATE SET FOR THE
SIGNING. IN VIEW OF PHOUMI'S AND HANOI'S APPARENT
ANNOYANCE WITH SOUVANNA'S DELAYING TACTICS, FAILURE TO SIGN
THIS WEEK COULD LEAD TO BREAKDOWN IN NEOGOTIATIONS.
SOUVANNA IS AWARE OF THIS AND
THEREFORE PROSPECTS ARE BRIGHT FOR COMPLETION OF
NEGOTIATION THIS WEEK.
DEAN

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